

Gagarin Statue to Go Up in London

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LONDON — A statue of Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin will stand guard along one of London's most important thoroughfares for the next 12 months, the British Council said — a gesture intended to mark the 50th anniversary of the first manned flight into space.

The aluminum-and-zinc likeness of the pioneering space hero will go up Thursday in honor of Gagarin's successful flight around the Earth from Baikonur, in modern-day Kazakhstan, the council said in a statement. It will stand opposite a statue of 18th-century British naval explorer Captain James Cook on London's Mall — the ceremonial route between Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square that Kate Middleton and Prince William will travel on their wedding day.

British Council chair Vernon Ellis said the statue was meant to pay tribute to the "sheer bravery and adventure" of Gagarin's space flight.

In a statement Ellis said, "through this statue we celebrate both that breakthrough for mankind and the U.K.-Russian relationship."

The statue is a replica of one commissioned in Lyubertsy, the city in Moscow's southern

outskirts where Gagarin once worked, and is a gift from Russia's Federal Space Agency, the council said.

It added that the statue would be taken down after a year and moved elsewhere in Britain.

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